To Margaret Avery
A belated birthday '33
Rebecca L. Muir

LISTEN TO THE MOCKING-BIRD

BOOKS BY

STODDARD KING

LISTEN TO THE MOCKING-BIRD

GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT

WHAT THE QUEEN SAID

LISTEN
TO THE MOCKING-BIRD

BY

STODDARD KING

GARDEN CITY
NEW YORK
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AND COMPANY, INC.
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FIRST EDITION

TO

MY WIFE

"THERE ARE USEFULLER THINGS FOR A GIRL TO DO THAN FURNISH A MAN WITH COPY."

Most of the pieces in this book are newspaper column verse and appeared in the *Spokane Spokesman-Review.* Several were first printed in *Life.* "Sonnet, Adaptable to a Variety of Occasions," was in the *Saturday Evening Post.* "Ballad of the Spirit of Christmas" was written for *The Bookman.*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PROLOGUE	1
WRONG NUMBERS	2
THE CURSE OF HYMEN	4
LINES FOR A BOUND VOLUME OF THE "CONGRESSIONAL RECORD"	6
HEARTH AND HOME	7
FROM A RINGSIDE SEAT	8
THE DOCTOR LOOKS AT LITERATURE	9
SUBSTITUTING FOR DESTINY	11
FROM A GLASS HOUSE	12
THE PERFECT LADY	13
PITY	14
AS TO CHEMISTS	15
FOR THE SAKE OF VARIETY	16
RIME TO BE CARRIED IN A VANITY CASE	18
SONNET (*Adaptable to a Variety of Occasions, Patent Applied for*)	19
ON FINDING AMONG ONE'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS A MOUSTACHE CUP	20
TO A NEW VOLUME OF THE "WORLD" ALMANAC	21
BY PROXY	22

PAGE

Confessions 23
Breakfast Song in Time of Diet 24
Objections and a Preference 25
Recollections of an Ex-Booster . . . 27
Romance in the Comic Strips 28
The Outline of Chess 29
Ballade of the Alphabet 31
The Elephant Lockstep 32
Overstocked. 33
May Rain 35
Dilemma 36
Slight Meditation on Natural History. . 37
Crime at Its Best 38
From the Depths 39
The Difference 40
A Modified Maxim 41
Perfection 42
The Gentle Bard 44
Epigram on a Hack Writer. 45
Idyll 46
Brief Poem in the Bucolic Vein 47
Diplomatic Communication to a Certain Robin 48
Well Groomed 50
Total Depravity 52
The Dingbat 53

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Cat	55
The Beards of Yore	56
A Primer of Politics	57
Comme Il Faut	60
Prize Babies	61
Home Is Where the Heart Is	63
Matters of Taste	65
Paradise Regained	67
Jazz Interlude	68
The Swami of Miami	70
Song for the Ocarina	72
Literary Eulogy	73
Around the Calendar	75
Spring Serenade at a Country Club	77
With the Mush	78
Vocabularies	79
Trombone Solo	81
Statement for the Defence	82
Invitation to Dinner	83
Recipe for a Smell	84
Handbook for Writers	85
Inspirational Stuff	86
The Rigours of Reginald	87
Item of Ancient History	88
Sweet Sadness	89
At a Furrier's Show Window	90

PAGE

—And all Way Stations 91
"All the Wanted Colours" 93
For one Night only 94
The Young Intellectual to His Love . . 95
Prize Poem 96
Pipe Dream 97
Aspirations of a Publican 98
Summer Resorts 99
Materia Medica 100
Ballade of Mournful Numbers 101
Memorial Day 103
Legend 104
The Minority Dissents 105
Writ of Abdication 106
Lines for "Poetry in the Home" Week . 107
Thoughts at the Movies 108
Ballad of the Spirit of Christmas . . . 109
To all Sad Comedians 111

LISTEN TO THE MOCKING-BIRD

LISTEN TO THE MOCKING-BIRD

—

PROLOGUE

Alas! I fear I have preferred
To listen to the mocking-bird,
  That parodist with wings,
When duty bade me tune my ears
To catch the music of the spheres
  And similar worth-while things.
Some say I have misspent my youth
(And like as not they speak the truth)
  With fiddles and bassoons;
Upon my alabaster brow
No laurels hang—but anyhow
  I've learned some dandy tunes!

WRONG NUMBERS

WHEN deep in soothing slumbers
Men lie supine or prone,
The callers of wrong numbers
Get busy on the phone.
Life's busiest disarrangers,
They never sleep; instead,
They call up perfect strangers
And get them out of bed.

They ask for Ed and Mabel,
They call for May and Joe;
You wish that you were able
To tell them where to go;
You think of swell examples
Of cutting repartee,
And practise sizzling samples—
At 8 A. M. next day.

Sometimes their tactics vary,
But do not calm your wrath;
They call and ask for Carrie
When you are in the bath;
Or else they time their calling
To catch you unawares,
And start you madly falling
Down several flights of stairs.

Their race the earth encumbers,
And takes from life its zest;
The callers of wrong numbers
Are a perennial pest.

But I've devised, to twist 'em,
A method of my own;
This, briefly, is my system—
''#$%—&''(****'—&#%''$# !!!
—there goes the phone!

THE CURSE OF HYMEN

SUNDRY ideas, some quite real,
And some, I shouldn't wonder, phony,
Are being offered now to heal
The holy state of matrimony.

The nuptial bark, it seems, is wrecked
And swept by waves from bow to mizzen,
Till being married's as abject
A fate as being cast in prison.

It is too late, perhaps, to save
The hapless souls already wedded
From the dread perils of the wave
Or the sharp rocks for which they're headed.

But helpful persons long to aid,
Though hard the task and dire the way be,
The foolish youth, the hopeless maid
Who are not married yet, but may be.

It wrings their hearts to think that lads
And lasses may, with steps that falter,
Follow their mothers and their dads
Down Satan's pathway to the altar.

But how to save them? There's the rub,
For Cupid's arrows still go flitting,
And bachelors forsake the club
And spinsters leave their wonted knitting.

A ticklish problem, mates! And we
  Who yearn for better things are harried
By rash young things who could be free,
  And yet, in spite of all, get married!

LINES FOR A BOUND VOLUME OF THE *CONGRESSIONAL RECORD*

WITHIN this book exposed to view
Are all the words that WEBSTER knew,
And several that he failed to mention,
Not having heard of their invention.
Here, too, in all their pristine grace,
Afforded lots of elbow-space,
Are phrases that their users took
From Mr. BARTLETT's well-known book.

Peep in this volume, and you'll find
Style by no human hand designed,
Great sentences where one may spy
No trace of any termini,
All separated, clause from clause,
By (Cheers)
(Loud laughter)
And (Applause).
This book preserves them all, I trust,
Where moths cannot break in and rust.

No man can hope to understand
How this our own, our native land
Is governed, till some day he sees
Row upon row of books like these,
And then he knows that we must be
A genuine Democracy!

HEARTH AND HOME

FOR SALE:—Bargain, owner leaving; 5-rm. bung.—Classified ad.

HOME is more than just four walls,
More than just a baby grand;
When the nesting instinct calls,
Home's a house, a bit of land—
Wherefore let your hat be hung
In a cozy 5-rm. bung.

Plutocrats have gilt *salons*
Where, presumably, they spend
Evenings clipping their coupons,
Dreaming of a dividend.
Happier they, if they had clung
To that little 5-rm. bung.

With the years comes middle age—
Then a man may take his spouse
To the more commodious stage
Of a ten-room Tudor house.
Not, however, when he's young;
Then he needs a 5-rm. bung.

Small enough for three's-a-crowd,
Large enough for song and dance,
Tall enough for heads unbowed
To the tyrant Circumstance—
Humble, yes, but not unsung,
Strictly modern 5-rm. bung.!

FROM A RINGSIDE SEAT

WHEN heaven and hell were both destroyed,
  Not many years ago,
And prophets such as Sigmund Freud
Had analyzed the anthropoid
  And snared the libido,
We laymen in contentment lay,
And said: "That's settled, anyway."

But brief was our serene repose,
  Ill-fated was our star,
For, right beneath the Freudian's nose,
New schools of modern thought arose
  To tell us what we are;
And out of the resulting schism
Emerged what's called behaviourism.

Behaviourism proves that men
  And women, kings and queens,
From birth to threescore years and ten,
Whate'er their ancestry has been,
  Are nothing but machines
That automatically function
Sans aspiration or compunction.

With this some thinkers disagree,
  And argument runs high
Among philosophers, while we
Are calm about it as can be,
  And watch the feathers fly.
No need for us to join the clatter—
We're nothing but the subject matter!

THE DOCTOR LOOKS AT LITERATURE

We all know Annie Laurie,
  Whose throat was like the swan,
And who was quite the loveliest maid
  That e'er the sun shone on;
But do we know, I wonder,
  That neck so smooth and fine
Resulted from a diet
  That was rich in iodine?

Lars Porsena of Clusium,
  By the nine gods he swore,
Displaying such a temper
  As none had seen before.
It scandalized his soldiers,
  It shocked the Roman youth,
And every bit of it was due
  To an infected tooth.

The boy who stood so staunchly
  Upon the burning deck
Was, by all modern standards,
  Deceased above the neck;
But let us give him credit,
  And try to understand
That he was but the victim
  Of a faulty thyroid gland.

Our knowledge is expanding
  At such a rapid rate
That literary heroes
  Seem anything but great.
By charting their reactions
  We discount all we see
In books by backward authors
  Who knew much less than we!

SUBSTITUTING FOR DESTINY

What we call destiny is largely a matter of the ductless glands.—From a treatise on endocrinology.

Out of the night that covers me,
I raise my voice, as Henley did,
And tell the cosmos, as did he,
That I of mortal fear am rid.
Likewise, my thesis I translate
For modern minds to understand—
Instead of saying "Pooh!" to fate,
I will defy the ductless gland.

I'll put the thyroid in its place,
And take no nonsense from the spleen;
As spokesman for the human race
I'll flaunt the evil endocrine.
Poetically I'll explain
The situation to the crowd:
(Continuing in the Henley vein)
"My glands are ductless but unbowed!"

Kismet, or destiny, or fate—
Whichever pseudonym you choose—
Is off the map and out of date,
By the best scientific news;
And that is pleasant, but beware
This dire and new-discovered threat—
Unless you plan your course with care
Some little gland will get you yet!

FROM A GLASS HOUSE

I LIVE in a house of the very best glass,
With never a sign of a curtain,
And that I'm observed by the people who pass
Is most undeniably certain;
They know who I am and they see what I do
(I might do much more, but I daren't)
For only a blind man could help peeking through
When the walls are so highly transparent.

I've a large pile of stones that I'm anxious to throw
At this or the other dear neighbour;
My aim is quite fair and my speed isn't slow,
And I wouldn't consider it labour.
Yet it seems I'm restrained by a statute, or law,
Applying to glass-mansion owners;
Held tightly in leash by a maxim, or saw,
That keeps me from joining the stoners.

Now, if I might dwell in an underground vault,
And live more or less in obscureness,
I could follow some fellow with whom I'd find fault
And sock him with vigour and sureness.
But sometimes, at that, though I know it's not right
In a town where glass houses abound,
I—this is in confidence—sneak out at night
And toss a few pebbles around!

THE PERFECT LADY

Women were feminine, women were sweet,
For ages and ages.
Pickers of apples for Adams to eat,
The pride of the poets, demure and discreet,
The despair of the sages.
They didn't cast votes and they didn't shoot dice—
The men wouldn't let them—
But they stayed right at home and were perfectly nice,
And what did it get them?

Women decided that they would be free,
Independent and equal;
They cut off their hair and wore skirts to the knee,
Which anyone could have predicted would be
The sartorial sequel.
They drove their own cars and they stayed out of nights—
Now nine out of ten do—
They said they were only asserting their rights,
And what could the men do?

Women may go back to feminine ways—
Please note I said maybe—
And take up the pastimes of earlier days,
Such as tatting and knitting and doing crochets
And minding the baby.
They may let their hair grow, and go in for curves
Like Grandma and Mother;
And won't that be fine, and a rest to our nerves?
Oh, ask me another!

PITY

If I were wise, I should have pity of men,
And of the barren substance of their days,
Seeing they struggle but to fall again,
And labour for scant recompense of praise.

I should have pity of sinners, were I good
With that great goodness that is friend of ill,
Pity of all who have misunderstood,
And lost the way, and are my brothers still.

But to my mind that wisdom is denied,
And no such goodness in my heart may be;
Wherefore, and of your charity beside,
Men, I beseech you to have pity of me.

AS TO CHEMISTS

The chemist is a person
  Who speaks in weighty terms,
He puts the Cossack curse on
  Bacteria and germs.

In mystic laboratories,
  With tubes, retorts, and sinks,
He wins undying glories
  By making stunning stinks.

Some newly figured datum
  He uses to disclose
The secrets of the atom,
  The ways of cellulose.

He can make soup from sirup,
  Perfume from mutton fat;
His job's to sit and stir up
  Synthetic-this and -that.

When he, in finest frenzy,
  Makes something sour and green,
He calls it Parabenzy-
  —disulphoethylene.

Of Chemistry my knowledge
  Is but a hollow shell;
I took the course at college,
  But only learned one smell.

FOR THE SAKE OF VARIETY

"Lecturers often complain that Americans fail to get into their books the savour of their own country. They know few birds beyond the robin, wren, and bluebird, wild flowers to them are often nameless, trees are either oaks, maples, or pines, the weather fair or rainy. . . ."

—Henry Seidel Canby in the *Saturday Review.*

In mad exuberance of song
I heard, upon the greasewood bough,
A loon lamenting loud and long
The fickle peewee's broken vow.

Across the grassy field, perfumed
By locust, chestnut, and magnolia,
I sought a shady dell, where bloomed
Campanula Rotundifolia.

'Twas there she waited, in the shade
Of sycamores and mountain ashes,
And the sad tune the nuthatch made
Bedewed with tears her silken lashes.

I brought her gentians, blue and pink,
And sought therewith to still her sorrow;
But all she said was: "Do you think
The weather will be fair to-morrow?"

"Not fair," I said, "nor will it rain;
The forecast, if my lady please, is:
Good growing weather for the grain,
With varying southwestern breezes."

She smiled; the curlew sang in praise,
  The shy skunk cabbage raised its head,
While, at two lovers and their ways,
  The redwood blushed a deeper red.

RIME TO BE CARRIED IN A VANITY CASE

When the skies are blue above you,
Lady, recollect I love you;
When the little raindrops wet you,
Never think that I'll forget you;
Be the weather cool or torrid,
Be it fine or be it horrid,
Mild the breezes or unruly,
I am still yours very truly.
Clip this verse, my lady fair,
Take it with you everywhere
As ubiquitous assurance
Of my passion's warm endurance;
Then what I neglect to say
(On some very busy day)
Will be spoken anyway!

SONNET

(Adaptable to a Variety of Occasions. Patent Applied for.)

There is { a spot in a secluded cove / a little pathway in a grove / a hilltop where the breezes rove
Where, on an unforgotten { night in June, / April noon,
You and I { heard the lovelorn crickets croon, / watched the waning summer moon,
While all insensibly our fancies wove
A golden gossamer of treasure-trove,
Gemmed with the jewels of the { robin's / skylark's tune; / starling's
And, as we { read, grass-encircled dune / talked, the silvery lagoon / strolled,
Wore shimmering veils of amethyst and mauve.

Do you remember, dearest? As for me,
No moment of high triumph and acclaim
Can ever be as lovely and as rare
As that immortal instant { by the sea, / on the lea,
Which memory, { Lucy, / Anna, evermore shall frame / Daphne, etc.,
Within an aureole of your { auburn / golden hair! / raven

ON FINDING AMONG ONE'S BIRTHDAY PRESENTS A MOUSTACHE CUP

I CANNOT but be highly flattered
  By this broad hint that my moustache
Needs help to keep from being spattered
  By tea and other things that splash.
I had not thought it so luxurious,
  Nor yet of so pronounced a droop
As to make well-bred people furious
  When I ingurgitate my soup.

There have been those who have derided
  My labial foliage as not
What nature ought to have provided
  To decorate that special spot;
And I, who dread the commentator
  And always shrink from satire's shafts,
Have wished that my moustache were greater—
  As large, let's say, as Justice Taft's.

And so this product of the potter,
  This gem of the ceramic art,
Kindles a happier flame and hotter
  Within my wan, discouraged heart.
Perhaps—who knows?—my languid whisker,
  Inspired to do its level best,
May become livelier and brisker,
  And ultimately drape my chest!

TO A NEW VOLUME OF THE *WORLD* ALMANAC

Oh tome of ineffable knowledge,
  Oh volume of catalogued fact,
Oh priceless and portable college
  Whose courses are short and compact!
Of adamant problems a softener,
  Used often when quizzes are set,
And used, I dare say, even oftener,
  To settle a bet.

To people who thrive on statistics
  You offer a cozy retreat,
You teach them of bees and ballistics,
  You lecture on stars and square feet.
Why anyone shelters a passion
  For figures, I never could see—
But if that's their favourite ration,
  It's all right with me.

I don't know the debt of the nation,
  Or what the year's cotton crop was,
But I cherish a deep admiration
  For any go-getter who does.
Great book, when the seekers of learning
  In palpitant multitudes come
For facts that will quiet their yearning,
  You tell 'em; I'm dumb!

BY PROXY

I LIKE to read of men who rise
  At morning's earliest, freshest hour,
And take a lot of exercise
  As prelude to a nice, cold shower.
I like to think of them, you see,
Because they're representing Me.

When they throw windows open wide
  To let the healthful breezes in,
I feel a glowing pinkness glide
  Across my warmly sheltered skin;
Although, of course, I'm not as red
As they, because I'm still in bed.

And when, with grim, determined grunts,
  They systematically writhe
Through all their repertoire of stunts,
  I feel myself grow brisk and lithe,
And bless them all for their ambition.
I use but one (the prone) position.

The average man—that's me—must spend
  A certain portion of the day
At tasks that make him stretch and bend,
  To keep disease and age away.
The exercise that others take
Maintains the average, for my sake.

CONFESSIONS

A BOOK which recently I read
Went not an inch above my head;
It did not have a word that made
Me seek the dictionary's aid,
And every page I understood—
It can't have been so very good.

A little poem lately seen
In I forget what magazine
Was like a songbird in the rain,
It reached my heart, and not my brain.
I shouldn't like such simple rhymes—
I must be far behind the times.

Yet do not count me one of those
Who cultivate the lowbrow pose,
Who crassly think that it is smart
To sneer when someone mentions Art,
And label everything effete
That does not wallow in the street.

That isn't it. But I object
To all that precious dialect
That simpers while it calls a spade
A ferrous agronomic blade.
At Culture's shrine I'm still devout—
But tell me, please, what it's about!

BREAKFAST SONG IN TIME OF DIET

Take, O take the cream away,
  Take away the sugar, too;
Let the morning coffee stay
  As a black and bitter brew.
I have gained since yesternight—
Shoot the calories on sight!

With the rising of the sun,
  Let my nourishment be bran;
Pass me, please, a sawdust bun
  To sustain the inner man.
I've put on a pound, almost—
Spread no butter on the toast!

Let the waffle and the egg
  Bask upon another's plate;
Do not offer me, I beg,
  Bacon, which produces weight.
Still, I have to live till noon,
Maybe I could stand a prune.

Men, they say, have eaten pie
  With their breakfasts, and survived;
Not for such a wretch as I
  Was such revelry contrived.
Every day the scales I scan.
Doctor's orders. Pass the bran.

THAT I don't like dogs
I am willing to confess,
And my fondness for cats
Is, if anything, less;
Lions are quarrelsome,
Likely to be rough,
And goldfish aren't nearly
Affectionate enough.

I don't care for rabbits
And I don't trust eels,
Poland China hogs are
Sloppy at their meals,
Peacocks are haughty,
Guinea hens rude,
And canaries won't sing
Unless they're in the mood.

Horses are handsome,
But sometimes they bite;
Coyotes keep you
Awake all night,
Walruses ruin
The living-room rug,
And grizzly bears have
A tendency to hug.

It is a fact which
I very much regret
That I have a hard time
Picking out a pet;

But I'm in no danger
  Of living all alone,
For I do like children,
  As long as they're my own.

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN EX-BOOSTER

When I was somewhat younger, less obese and less myopic,
And full of high, indomitable zeal,
Whenever I was called upon by causes philanthropic,
I stoutly put my shoulder to the wheel.

I counted lost the day in which I met with no committee
Or laboured in no altruistic "drive";
I longed to be identified with those of our fair city
Whose joy it was to labour and to strive.

My nights were filled with speeches, and my days with printed pages,
Exhorting me to help the work along;
It ruined my digestion, and it brought no added wages,
But I was young, and vigorous, and strong.

I saw the Gleam and followed it; at luncheons and at dinners
I cheered for every Movement that arose;
When there was competition, I abode among the winners—
And once I even won a suit of clothes!

But now I linger far behind the goer and the getter—
I've no one but myself, of course, to blame—
I've passed the torch of uplift on to younger men and better,
And the smoke goes up the chimney just the same.

ROMANCE IN THE COMIC STRIPS

From her to him flew Cupid's darts,
  Love at first sight's eternal sign;
He looked at her, and little hearts
  Appeared along the dotted line.

As yet no word had either said,
  But as they met beside the park,
There shone above his smitten head
  A huge interrogation mark.

He took her for a little walk
  And sought for tender words to speak,
But all that he could say was "Awk!"
  And all that she could answer: "Eek!"

He purchased her a chiffon scarf,
  He also hinted at a ring;
The maiden coyly murmured: "Arf!"
  To which the youth responded: "Zing!"

When rivals came their luck to try
  Within the cutie's drawing room,
The lover smote them hip and thigh,
  With cries of "Biff!" and "Klop!" and "Zoom!"

Then wedding bells, with joyful "Klang!"
  Proclaimed the sealing of a vow,
And, hand in hand, the sweethearts sang
  Their nuptial hymn of "Bam!" and "Pow!"

THE OUTLINE OF CHESS

The people I have known
  Who play the game of chess
Are happiest when alone,
  Inclined to sober dress,
Free from the curse of drink,
  Endowed with homely wit,
At times content to sit and think,
  At other times to sit.

Where chess is being played
  There are no cheering throngs,
No peanuts, lemonade,
  Or rousing college songs,
But in a shaded room,
  Behind locked portals penned,
Where all is silent as the tomb,
  The champions contend.

They move the humble pawn,
  The red king and the white,
From the first ray of dawn
  Till far into the night.
Not with a hectic flush
  Is the stern conflict fraught,
But now and then someone says "Hush!"
  And takes time out for thought.

Where great chess players strive
  Emotions boil and seethe;
You know that they're alive
  Because they sometimes breathe.

They play and never quit,
  They gaze and seldom wink—
They do not do a thing but sit,
  Save when they sit and think.

BALLADE OF THE ALPHABET

A AND B are congenial letters,
They play chief parts in the schoolboy's sum,
C and D are the brisk go-getters,
Debit and Credit, Clever and Dumb;
J is a hick, and R is a bum,
E and O are creatures of sound,
M is the lad who makes things hum,
And X marks the spot where the body was found.

Z is the clown of the alphabetters,
Always lively and never glum,
P and Q are a pair of fretters,
W hammers the big bass drum;
Twenty-five of the pack have clumb
To useful station and honoured ground,
But day after day, till kingdom come,
X marks the spot where the body was found.

X in algebra forges fetters
To which poor lasses and lads succumb,
X makes sensible people debtors
To mystic symbols and similar scum;
Triple X is a brand of rum,
DX tortures the radio hound—
And, down in the depths of the dirtiest slum,
X marks the spot where the body was found.

X-rays, Xenon, and Xanthium
To the scientist's mind are words profound,
But to newspaper readers and chewers of gum,
X marks the spot where the body was found.

THE ELEPHANT LOCKSTEP

I HAVE an elephant and you have an elephant,
A pink one, a yellow one, or red, white, and blue,
A big one or a tiny one,
An ugly or a shiny one—
We all have elephants we carry water to.

My pet elephant calls itself a hobby,
Yours is a lodge, and his is a committee;
One of Nature's laws is:
People must have Causes,
Using up their spare time and never showing pity.

I have a water pail, and you have a water pail,
Heavy things to carry, but manfully we trudge,
There's no end to filling them,
No escape from spilling them—
Lots of water goes to waste, if I am any judge.

When we were small boys, we laboured for the circus,
Sloshing with the water pails, hard work and slow;
Though there was no cash in it,
What we did had dash in it—
After all the tubs were full, we got to see the show.

Now I have an elephant, and you have an elephant,
Some have a herd of them, some have a few;
Stylish ones and dingy ones,
Generous and stingy ones—
We all have elephants we carry water to!

OVERSTOCKED

When Orpheus sang his deathless strains,
The very rocks and trees
Of Greece's classic hills and plains
Swayed to his melodies.

But music then could not be had
As cheaply as to-day,
When every tiny lass and lad
Is studying to play.

When Orpheus was in his prime,
Good music was a treat;
But we can hear, for one thin dime,
The movie organs bleat.

Our striplings learn the saxophone
In seven easy lessons,
And women faint, while strong men groan
And load their Smith and Wessons.

Now concerts, via magnavox,
Are nightly things and daily,
And everybody beats the box
Or strums the ukulele.

When Music, heavenly maid, was young,
Her cult was more exclusive;
To-day, wherever jazz is sung,
Good critics wax abusive.

If all our instruments we'd burn
In one great, flaming pyre,
Would Orpheus, do you think, return
And smite his blooming lyre?

MAY RAIN

Beside the door the lilacs grew
A month of sunlit days,
I saw their leaflets struggle through,
Their purple banners blaze.

No hint of magic in them dwelt,
No throb of joy or pain,
Until the night their blossoms felt
The blessing of the rain.

And then the clean-washed air was filled
With lilt of fairy feet,
And pulses rhythmically thrilled
To find the dark so sweet.

There is no instrument to play,
Nor any throat to sing
The misty melody of May
That rain-swept lilacs bring!

DILEMMA

When cosmic themes pervade my verse,
The public elevates an eyebrow,
And blasts me with the dreadful curse:
"Too highbrow!"

But when to humbler strains I stoop
And sign a diffident initial,
The critics cry: "He's merely superficial!"

When brisk I tap my Underwood
Until its ancient carcass tingles,
They say: "Oh, yes; he's fairly good
At jingles."

But if I write, with pensive pen,
Lines sweet and slow as oozing honey,
The shout goes up: "He's better when
He's funny!"

Like the old tyrant's head, with knife
Hung by a single hair above it,
Such is your humble servant's life—
I love it!

SLIGHT MEDITATION ON NATURAL HISTORY

The little birdie in the tree
Is just as happy as can be.
The little insect on the flower
Improves each gay and shining hour.
The silent clam beneath the sand
Enjoys himself to beat the band.
The alligator in the slime
Is having a delightful time.
So why should I repine at fate?
Be glad, you cry, and emulate
The clam, the insect, and the bird!

Don't ask me what I said.
You heard.

CRIME AT ITS BEST

Disgusted with crimes that are piffling and messy,
We think of the James brothers, Frankie and Jesse,
Who never degraded the clan of the James
By writing "confessions" and signing their names.

When poverty hovered o'er Jesse and Frank,
They saddled their horses and held up a bank,
(A calling in which it is wrong to engage)
But they never appeared on the vaudeville stage.

Though Jesse was tough and his brother was tougher,
They never made readers of newspapers suffer
By reading the sob sisters' sorrowful sobbing
Of how they read Browning before going robbing.

The gang that they worked with was surely a bad one,
But as for smart lawyers, I doubt that they had one;
Insanity dodges they never were pleading,
And that's why their life makes such excellent reading.

A movie rights offer they'd both have resented,
(Provided that movies had then been invented).
So in spite of our virtue, it's hard to suppress
A sneaking affection for Frank and for Jess.

Mrs. Green and Mrs. White,
  Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Gray,
Spoke to me the other night,
  Bowed to me the other day;
Yet, were this my soul to dwell
  In a hot infernal niche,
I declare I could not tell
  Which of those dear dames was which.

I am snobbish, rude, and mean,
  Is the talk around the town.
Mrs. White told Mrs. Green,
  Mrs. Gray told Mrs. Brown.
I possess no single jot
  Of good form or etiquette,
For they know that I did not
  Recognize them when we met.

Spare the rod, O Mrs. White!
  And cease firing, Mrs. Gray!
There is not an ounce of spite
  In the carcass that you flay.
Ere you bar me from your flats,
  Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Green,
Do, sweet ladies, wear your hats
  So your faces can be seen!

THE DIFFERENCE

A plumber may be a poet, but a poet is not likely to be a plumber.—From an advertisement.

THESE two great callings are, you say,
Of antithetic types. . . .
Quite true.
The poet pipes his lay,
But the plumber lays his pipes.

A MODIFIED MAXIM

"A PENNY saved is a penny earned"
I've heard since I was a baby.
Who said it first I never have learned—
It was Benjamin Franklin, maybe.
So I saved my pennies as fast as they came,
I earned them, fair and square;
And it's not that I'm trying to dodge the blame—
But where are they now, oh where?

A hundred pennies, by actual count,
Are the same as one whole dollar;
I'm sure I've figured the right amount,
Though I'm rather a backward scholar.
A dollar makes you a man of means,
But almost at once you're flat,
For you carry the coin in your business jeans,
And it vanishes—zip!—like that.

My argument is, that it's quite all right
To save and to hoard a penny,
For the purchasing power of the copper mite
Is not very much, if any.
But never let thrift your watchword be
As to sums above a cent,
For a dollar saved, you may take it from me,
Is only a dollar spent!

PERFECTION

They make me envious, the scenes
Depicted in the magazines
To illustrate the merry tales
That stimulate the issue's sales.

I don't approve the things, 'tis true,
The people in the pictures do,
Their lives are filled with storm and strife
And coveting one's neighbour's wife.

But always, from the artist's pen,
Come wonder women, super-men,
Royally handsome, one and all,
And never less than eight feet tall.

The clever way they do their hair
And drape themselves upon a chair
And are not baggy at the knee
Was never seen on land or sea.

No matter what their state of stress,
They make no errors in their dress;
The men are of the stalwart type,
And "smoke a contemplative pipe."

The women leave me weakly fond;
They're always slender, mostly blonde,
And lavish smiles on handsome brutes
In smartly tailored bathing-suits.

With jealousy I turn quite green
When I peruse a magazine;
It lays me low, it leaves me flat—
If life could only be like that!

THE GENTLE BARD

My little poems spread their wings
And flutter round about;
But each and every time one sings,
The jazz birds drown it out.

More raucous utterances usurp
The way to people's ears;
My little poems gently chirp,
And not a person hears.

Still, amid all the noisy crew,
A calm disdain I keep;
When others toot the loud bazoo
My little birds say:
"Cheap!"

EPIGRAM ON A HACK WRITER

You may deprive him of his pen and ink,
  And still he'll write with fluency and taste;
But he will totter on starvation's brink
  If you remove his scissors and his paste!

IDYLL

He was a selfish shellfish,
A sylphish shellfish she,
She flirted with a jellfish
One day, beside the sea.

And, in a manner elfish,
Yet lacking greed for pelf,
She told the selfish shellfish
His place was on the shelf.

Then he, in rage, cried: "*Well*, fish,
Your flirting makes me wroth!"
He fell upon the jellfish
And beat him to a froth.

To-day, the folk who sell fish
The touching story tell
Of a sylphish shellfish weeping
By a selfish shellfish' cell.

BRIEF POEM IN THE BUCOLIC VEIN

I RISE to toot the farmer's horn,
His lasting praise to sing.
He raises:
families
and corn,
and hell,
and everything!

DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATION TO A CERTAIN ROBIN

Friend bird, you make so excellent a neighbour,
You have so many traits that I admire,
As cheerfully about the place you labour,
Extracting worms to feed your fledgling choir—

So like my own, in fact, your daily lot is,
So filled with hard and unremitting toil,
That, if within your heart a tender spot is,
I know you'll spare the products of my soil.

I do not ask that you forego all pleasure,
Such as may come from berries two or three,
But I'd be pleased if you would show a measure
Of lenience to my one small cherry tree.

Just that one tree—how I have watched and nursed it!
How I have hoped it might produce a crop!
So far, no insect enemy has cursed it—
It's full of cherries now, from base to top.

Robin, I know you love a cherry diet,
I know you must have fruit to keep your health,
But my one tree—surely you can pass by it,
And fill your needs from some great orchard's wealth.

True, I could purchase fruit of finer flavour;
But you can see, friend Robin, can you not,
That it would lack the sentimental savour
Of cherries sprung from my own garden plot.

And so I ask you, beg you, and entreat you
To let me have my cherries, just this year,
And in return I'll undertake to greet you
With frequent food, when hungry winter's here!

WELL GROOMED

A THING that fascinates me in the movies,
  That makes me go to see them when I can
(In spite of their detractors)
Is the way the picture actors
  Are always so completely spick-and-span.
They're continually having mad adventures,
  They will beard the dirtiest villain in his lair,
But although they're treated meanly,
They come bobbing up serenely,
  And they never muss their clothing or their hair.

You can put a movie hero in a shipwreck—
  Where he knows how movie heroes should behave—
You may jeopard his survival
In a struggle with a rival,
  But he'll never miss a shoe shine or a shave.
No matter what grim perils he's encountered,
  No matter what dire tasks he's had to face.
Though battered, worn, and played out,
He will face the final fade-out
  With every hair precisely in its place.

The same is true, without a reservation,
  Of the feminine adorner of the screen;
Though she pass through fire and water,
Nights of carnage, days of slaughter,
  She retains the calm composure of a queen;

Which is why, I think, we ought to view the pictures
With desire for emulation in our hearts,
And devote ourselves to neatness
In its logical completeness,
As we see it in the youngest of the arts!

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

I KNOW this is a trivial topic,
I make excuses as I start,
Though subjects just as microscopic
Have often touched the people's heart.
What I am after is an inkling
Of why the gadgets, steel or brass,
That lawn-possessors use for sprinkling
Will not squirt water on the grass.

There is no end of such devices,
Some of them bad, and others worse;
They come in various styles, their prices
Are geared to every kind of purse.
Hot weather comes, you go and buy one,
And you attach it to your hose—
Have you a spot that is a dry one?
That won't be where the water goes.

The sprinkler loves to deluge driveways,
It longs to irrigate cement;
In vain do tortured minds contrive ways
To regulate the spray's descent.
The porch receives a thorough sozzle,
The garden pathway swims in mud,
Unless you firmly grasp the nozzle,
And personally guide the flood!

THE DINGBAT

When spring had brought its birds and buds,
And winter's winds had fled,
We used to take the stovepipes down
And pile them in the shed.
Then we would satisfy the needs
Of our esthetic souls
By getting fancy dingbats out
To fill the stovepipe holes.

The dingbats—you remember them—
Were circular and flat,
A polished brass circumference,
And Art inside of that.
A flower piece or "The Stag at Bay,"
Your choice of handsome scenes—
Some people liked the landscapes best,
Some fancied the marines.

The parlour, in those bygone springs,
Acquired new charm and grace,
With ugly stovepipes taken out,
And dingbats in their place.
Their art was of no formal school,
Old-timers will recall,
But what a ray-sher-shay effect
They added to the wall!

The other day I undertook
To purchase at the store
A dingbat for a stovepipe hole,
As oft I'd done before.

The things they showed me—ah, my friends,
No wonder I am glum;
What can one do with stovepipe holes
When Art is on the bum?

THE CAT

When Noah beached on Ararat,
He found that he saved a cat
(Or rather two) from where the Flood
Had left the earth submerged in mud.
In getting up his list he'd winked
And tried to make the cat extinct,
Because he knew, and knew full well,
Its tendency for raising hell.
But somehow, in the rainy dark,
Two cats had sneaked aboard the Ark
And had triumphantly survived,
Malicious, sly, and many-lived.
"Ah, well," said Noah, "that is that"—
And put a curse upon the cat,
A complex, triple-jointed curse
That can't be reproduced in verse.

So that is why the cat will play
And frisk and frolic all the day,
And lie beside the fire and purr,
And let the children stroke its fur.
But it remembers, after dark,
The curse it heard on Noah's Ark,
And sings, in ecstasy of fright,
A hymn of hate throughout the night.

THE BEARDS OF YORE

When heroes were valiant and knighthood in flower,
No man without whiskers was trusted with power,
Nobility's chins wore a capillate pall,
And the beards of great monarchs were longest of all.
The breezes that blew
Had something to do,
And sweetly they sighed where the shrubbery grew.

No man was respected or honoured or feared
Unless he could show a luxurious beard,
And nations were run on the excellent plan
That the longer the spinach, the greater the man.
The breezes could croon
Any kind of a tune
Through the grand-ducal fringe and the royal festoon.

Democracy devastates beautiful things—
It bares the proud chins of the barons and kings,
Exposes each blemish and weakness and flaw,
Till we gaze on our rulers without any awe.
And the wind only moans
In lugubrious tones
For whiskers forgotten, and long-vanished thrones.

A PRIMER OF POLITICS

A is for Animus, lurking behind
Every remark that is spoken or signed.

B is for Boss, who is shy and remote,
Never makes speeches, but gets out the vote.

C is for Candidate; he is the one
Who has all the worry, and misses the fun.

D is for Delegate, whom you can tell
By his diffident manner around the hotel.

E is for Editor; gray is his hair,
For he makes both sides sore when he tries to be fair.

F is for Farmer, of various sections.
If it wasn't for him, there would be no elections.

G is for Glory, of which there's enough
For all who have leanings toward that sort of stuff.

H is for Heckle, and Handshake as well;
They may be waste effort, you never can tell.

I is for Issue, a sacred tradition
That's carefully nursed by the wise politician.

J is for Job. It were utterly vain
For me to go further, and try to explain.

K is for Kibosh, a species of doom
That frequently falls on a promising Boom.

L is for Lincoln, whose name's always used
When an audience fails to get quickly enthused.

M is for Meetings—all over the land
They're a greater success if you have a good band.

N is for Newspaper, heartily prized
By citizens anxious to be advertised.

O is for Onus, a thing to be placed
On this man or that man, according to taste.

P is for Platform, and also for Plank,
And neither means much, to be perfectly frank.

Q is for Questionnaire—to his dismay,
They come in the Candidate's mail every day.

R is for Roorback—let's hope you and I
Will never have one to affirm or deny.

S is for Speech, which should always be brief,
But is quite the reverse, to the auditor's grief.

T is for Taxes, which Orators vow
Must be reduced, though they never say how.

U is for Unction. When Pointing with Pride,
This is a thing that no Speaker can hide.

V is for Voter, who faithfully votes,
But cannot distinguish the Sheep from the Goats.

W's Water, a liquid, I think,
That's found in the glasses whence spellbinders drink.

X is the mark that we make at the head
Of the column of names that inspires the least dread.

Y is for Yawn, which one cannot suppress
In the midst of the usual campaign address.

Z is the gaudy political Zoo,
Which is tired as can be when the circus is through.

COMME IL FAUT

Pyjamas must be smart.—Advertisement.

I KNOW that I could never hope to be
  The glass of fashion and the mould of form
In what is sometimes called a *robe de nuit,*
  The flowing kind that keeps a fellow warm.
Red flannel falls just short of being *chic,*
  Pink silk is for the frivolous and flighty—
The touch of sober smartness that I seek
  Is not among the features of the nighty.

But the Pyjama! Notice, if you please,
  The antepenult with its stylish "y"!
You have to spell it thus, to be at ease
  Among such smooth sophisticates as I.
Ah, the Pyjama! Even ready-made
  It has distinctive draping and alignment,
And in it, never fear, a man's arrayed
  According to the canons of refinement.

In circles where the niceties of dress
  Attain, almost, the dignity of art,
Your hats, your shoes, may falter more or less,
  But your Pyjamas always must be smart.
The colour does not matter, or the stripe—
  Some like them gay and some prefer them paler—
But having found the cut that suits your type,
  Stick close to that, and never change your tailor!

PRIZE BABIES

Once there was a baby,
A nice plump baby,
She had brown curly hair, and large blue eyes;
Her parents were so proud of her
They longed to tell the crowd of her,
Took her to a baby show, and there she won a prize.

A good prize, as prizes go, it didn't please the baby,
For babies, you might say, are always on show;
Flashlights flared at her,
Queer people stared at her,
Sitting there playing with a small pink toe.

Twenty years later, and the nice plump baby
Was a very cute girl of the fashionable size;
Followed by photographers,
Press agents, and biographers,
She went into a beauty show, and there she won a prize.

Not a very big prize, but still she was delighted,
She smirked and she simpered,
She strutted and she posed;
Acted autocratical,
Haughty, and high-hatical,
Joined a comic opera show the day before it closed.

And once she was a baby,
A nice plump baby,
Playing quite contentedly with small pink toes;
Now she is vociferous,
Pushing, and pestiferous—
Life should never be so sad, but that's the way it goes!

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Like various other bards, whose lays
Fill this and that forgotten tome,
I used to sing a lot in praise
Of home.

I used to write the usual con
About what joy it is to be
At home, with youngsters perched upon
Each knee.

I rang the changes on the hymn
About the fireside's cheerful glare,
The Little Woman's happy vim,
Her care.

To all my verse I strove to give
The throb that to such work belongs,
And prospered, till I tried to live
My songs.

I hung all day about the house
And bubbled with domestic zest,
Till I became unto my spouse
A pest.

I loitered by the family fire,
Fulfilling my poetic dream,
And roused in her a mad desire
To scream.

What my experiences have been
I do not think it wise to say;
It seems that I was only in
The way.

Yet still my little rhymes I jot
With loving, sentimental touch,
And still I stay at home, but not
So much.

MATTERS OF TASTE

Some like movies,
And some like shows,
But I like a baby
With a pink button nose.

Some like golfing
And some like to fish,
But I like eating
From a blue Delft dish.

Some like dancing
And some like cards,
But I like sitting
In people's back yards.

Some like radios
And some like a band,
But I like poetry
I don't understand.

I and the other people
Get along fine;
They have their likes
And I have mine.

They think my likes
Are mostly a pose;
What I think of their likes
I needn't disclose.

For some like frankness
And hard plain fact,
But I prefer silence
And a little bit of tact.

PARADISE REGAINED

The curse of Adam, some believe,
Was lighter than the curse of Eve,
Since Adam suffered from the Fall
Only a little, if at all.
He had, of course, to turn his hand,
At first, to cultivating land,
But soon was rid of all such fetters
And merely had to dictate letters,
While poor Eve's work was never through—
She had a thousand things to do,
All incident to keeping house
And comforting her lazy spouse.

That may be right, it may be wrong,
But Eve did not endure it long;
To toil she shortly bid defiance
And organized Domestic Science,
With fireless cookers, percolators,
Electrical refrigerators,
Machines as fast as she could buy them
To wash the dishes and to dry them,
To get the laundry out on Monday,
To sweep the parlour rug on Sunday,
To make the coffee, toast the rolls,
To mend the rips and darn the holes.

She used to work from sun to sun,
But now she's through by half-past one,
And flits about in giddy raiment,
While Adam—makes another payment.

JAZZ INTERLUDE

I COULD stand
A jazz band,
If the players would sit still;
The tunes
That it croons
Are all right.
But when the players wiggle,
Bounce around,
And jiggle,
In my ire
I desire
To fight.

Some day
I shall lay
For a jazz band musicker,
Who snorts
And contorts
And jerks,
With a big, shiny, clean gun,
Maybe a machine gun—
You bet
He will get
The works.

And I'll cry:
"Now die,
You St. Vitus dancer!
Though I hate
To create
A row:

You jerked and you jiggled,
Bounced around and
Wiggled;
But you WILL
Keep still—
Starting now!"

THE SWAMI OF MIAMI

To THE city of Miami,
Where the air is soft and balmy,
Came a celebrated Swami
In a turban and a gown.
Being Hindu or Bengali,
He was anything but jolly,
And denounced all kinds of folly
That were current in the town.

Seated underneath a palm, he
Taught the people of Miami—
"Be ascetic," cried the Swami,
"Banish every earthly thought!"
He advised his congregation
To try silent meditation
For the psychic consummation
They so feverishly sought.

He was picturesque and gentle,
Altogether Oriental,
And he paid no sort of rental
For his space beneath the palms;
The disciples he was teaching
Soon discovered that his preaching
Did not hinder him from reaching
For a modicum of alms.

Though exalted was his mission,
Spiritual his condition,
He exacted high tuition
From the pupils at his feet;

And, while most of them obeyed him
And punctiliously paid him,
Those who thought they could evade him
    Found him anything but sweet.

Presently some ancient fogy,
Caring naught for Om or Yogi,
Bore a grievance—and a stogy—
    To the Chief of the police;
And the night train took the Swami,
While there hovered, soft and balmy,
O'er the households of Miami
    Comforting domestic peace.

SONG FOR THE OCARINA

A crew is at work laying out a townsite by the damsite.—
News item in the Ione, Wash., *Gazette.*

THERE's a townsite by a damsite in the land where I
was born,
In a green and happy valley in the West;
I think about it often, and am weary and forlorn,
For of all the spots I knew it was the best.
The woods where once I wandered and the holes where
once I swam,
The cataract where water tumbled down,
Are gone, I fear, forever, for the town has built a dam,
And the dam will make a city of the town.

The village I remember when it was not worth a dam,
For horsepower was not greatly in demand;
Its meadows were the domicile of gentle cow and lamb,
And real estate was nothing much but land.
Oh, progress brings its changes, and I oughtn't to com-
plain
That busy men have money to invest—
Yet I cannot help remembering, with reminiscent pain,
That townsite by the damsite in the West!

LITERARY EULOGY

I LIKE almanacs—
They make elegant reading.

They have weather forecasts
For a year ahead,
With severe cold waves around the Great Lakes,
Thunderstorms in the Mississippi Valley
And high winds off the coast
Of New Jersey.
That's the kind of stuff I like to read;
Why shouldn't I?
I don't live in New Jersey.

But I guess the best thing
About almanacs
Is the joke department.
Nothing radical or revolutionary,
But good old conservative jokes,
Reliable ones,
About Pat and Mike,
And Mrs. Newlywed and the biscuits,
With the international flavour added
By a couple of jolly English wheezes
Concerning what the Fishwife said
To the Curate.

I laugh heartily at those jokes—
Why shouldn't I?
I always have.

The testimonials are fine, too—
They all have happy endings.
They throw a kindly light
On life as it is lived
All around us;
And what is more,
There is nothing in any of them to offend
The most fastidious.
I get a lot out of those testimonials—
Why shouldn't I?
Everybody enjoys fiction.

I like almanacs—
They don't cost anything.

AROUND THE CALENDAR

WINTER brings me chilly toes,
Glowing cheeks, and cherry nose,
Winds that whistle round the corner,
Christmas pies à la Jack Horner,
Bills for necessary fuels,
Snow, and magazine renewals,
And a high, undaunted zeal
To accomplish something real.

Summer brings me tennis bats,
Swimming suits, and Bangkok hats,
Motor journeys to the lakes,
Picnics, bugs, and garter snakes,
Sunburnt neck and blistered shoulders,
Hotel ads and railroad folders,
And a high, undaunted zeal
To accomplish something real.

Autumn, too, and gentle spring
Various sorts of presents bring,
Making me admire each season
For a wholly different reason,
Likewise managing to fire me,
Animate me and inspire me
With a high, undaunted zeal
To accomplish something real.

Summer, winter, spring, and fall,
I enjoy and love them all,
Gladly, gratefully possessing
Their diversity of blessing,

Wondering, with each season new,
What on earth has happened to
Spoil my high, undaunted zeal
To accomplish something real.

SPRING SERENADE AT A COUNTRY CLUB

COME, little golfers, the snowbanks are melting,
The icebergs are thawing from bunker and tee,
The soft little raindrops are merrily pelting,
And soon you'll be happy as happy can be;
Sing ho and sing hey,
There are foursomes to play,
And scores to be counting, so up and away!

Come, little golfers, the greens are emerging
And putting on garments of emerald grass,
All traces of winter the sunshine is purging,
So get out the brassie, and shine up the brass!
Sing hey and sing ho
For the breezes that blow,
And the cute little handicaps, all in a row!

Rise, little golfers, betimes in the morning,
And sniff the sweet zephyrs, and caper and sing;
Give never a thought to the Weather Man's warning—
The calendar says so, it HAS to be Spring!
Sing hey and sing hi,
There is blue in the sky,
And blushingly blossoms the first alibi!

WITH THE MUSH

I OFTEN think, as I commit
  My daily journalistic caper,
That no one living by his wit
  Should labour for a morning paper.

His gems of thought, his feats of style,
  He polishes as best he's able,
Knowing, poor fellow, all the while,
  They're headed for the breakfast table.

He's heard it said that, at the hour
  That's matutinal and diurnal,
Even the finest families glower
  Over the just-delivered journal.

He knows his customers peruse
  As breakfast steadily progresses,
The comic pictures and the news,
  The murders and the weather guesses.

But still he clutches at the hope
  That someone, somewhere, yet will deign
Above the morning cantaloupe,
  To view the offspring of his brain.

And, with the coffee cups in mind,
  He watches every phrase, to see
That it is filling but refined,
  As all good breakfast food should be.

WHEN an ordinary person meets an ordinary friend,
In the merry month of April or of May,
This is all the coin of chatter he is likely to expend:
"Swell day!"

When a snappy statistician meets an ordinary sap,
In the iridescent atmosphere of spring,
He is apt to turn the spigot of his conversation's tap,
And remark: "The accumulated excess of moisture is
7.56 per cent. above the mean annual rainfall,
exclusive of an area of 33,879 square miles
as shown on the chart—"
And it doesn't mean a thing!

When an ordinary fellow meets an ordinary lass,
Where the little yellow daffodillies grow,
Though his heart's a seething crater, all he mumbles as
they pass
Is "Hello!"

When an ordinary poet sees an ordinary bird,
Alighted on an ordinary limb,
He gives immediate utterance, to show how he is stirred,
(In full and flowing phrases, for he gets so much a word)
To a hymn.

So I'd wish to be a poet at the season of the year
That is painted in the buddingest of greens,
For we all are made excited by the selfsame brand of
cheer,
But the bard has this advantage—he can make entirely
clear
What he means!

TROMBONE SOLO

I LIKE people
Who strut their stuff;
Any kind of people,
Nice ones or tough.
I like people
With swagger in their step,
Hot-air people, full
Of popcorn and pep,
Four-flushing people
Whose gestures are free—
Strut your stuff, people,
Don't
mind
me!

I like people
Who feel their oats,
High-stepping people
With ego in their throats,
Telling tall stories,
Taller than the steeple,
Getting away with it—
That kind of people.
If it's done properly,
Carried with an air,
Strut your stuff, people—
I
won't
care!

STATEMENT FOR THE DEFENCE

"Too many books are being written and published."—Sir Gilbert Parker.

Deaf as we are from the printing shop's racket,
Dazed as we are by the books that appear,
Each with a skyrocket blurb on its jacket,
Calling itself the event of the year,
Swamped as we are by the flood of new volumes,
Filling our shelves to their uttermost nooks,
Pray let me say, in this humblest of colyums,
"No, there can never be too many books!"

Glutting the market from June to December,
High on the counter the new books are piled;
Treat them not coldly, but pause and remember
Each little booklet is somebody's child.
Think of them, critic, not harshly or smugly,
Banish the sneer from your excellent phiz—
There is no duckling so hopelessly ugly
But somebody loves it, because it is his.

Ponderous tomes of adventure and travel,
Thin little packets of timorous verse,
Mystery yarns we are asked to unravel—
None is so bad that it couldn't be worse.
Too many books? I resent and deny it;
Let us, brave printer, have more of your wares.
Here is a new one; peruse it and buy it,
For somebody wrote it, and somebody cares!

INVITATION TO DINNER

Draw up to the table, Mabel,
And eat with your old-time vim;
You had better be plump than dead, my dear,
You had better be safe than slim.
The sausages beckon, the white bread calls,
The hour has arrived to dine—
Draw up to the table, Mabel my love,
The creamed potatoes are fine!

Hark not to the fable, Mabel,
Of the vanishing silhouette;
Be deaf to the song of the diet sharps,
And eat as of yore you et!
The pork chops sizzle, the pudding steams,
The goose is ready to carve—
As long as you're able, Mabel my love,
Eat, though the whole world starve!

The beasts of the stable, Mabel,
Can live on a wisp of hay,
But you are the cream of the human race—
Tear into the cheese soufflé!
Don't mind if it gives you a curve or two,
Whatever the styles may be—
Draw up to the table, Mabel my love,
It will be all right with me!

RECIPE FOR A SMELL

You take two kinds of peppers—green and red—
  Celery seed and mustard seed and dill,
And cauliflower (but not too large a head),
  Some good strong onions of the purest quill,
Then garlic—here you have to use discretion
If you'd attain high rank in the profession.

Add now whatever vegetables you've got,
  And choose your vinegar with utmost care;
Put all these items in your largest pot,
  But do not fill it—leave some room to spare
In case, when you have finished, you should find
Savoury bits that can't be left behind.

A whiff, at last, of allspice or of clove
  And just a bare sufficiency of salt,
Deft engineering of the kitchen stove
  (For all else fails, if this should be at fault).
Then will arise the priceless, nonpareil,
Unbeatable, and ne plus ultra smell.

It doesn't matter what you call the mess—
  Chowchow or chili sauce or picalilli—
Names do not matter, since your real success
  Lies in a smell that knocks all others silly,
That pungent mixture of assorted spice,
The sniffer's dream, the autumn's paradise!

GRAMMAR is annoying,
  Syntax is worse,
Prosody's a nuisance
  When you have to write verse.

I don't consider it
  Part of my function
To tell why an adverb
  Isn't a conjunction.

I enjoyed parsing
  When I was a lad,
Now tenses bother me
  And moods make me mad.

When a man is writing
  A thousand words a day,
He ought to take diagrams
  And throw them all away.

Grammar is a fine thing
  For children in the schools,
But when you're really writing
  You can't fuss with rules.

Use short sentences,
  Make yourself clear,
And you'll only need a pencil
  And a good sharp ear.

INSPIRATIONAL STUFF

Dress well and succeed in a new shirt.—Haberdasher's ad.

If you're feeling all discouraged,
  And you're ready, 'most, to quit,
If you've lost the old ambition,
  And your hopes have hit the grit,
Never weaken, boy, I tell you,
  Don't let on that you are hurt—
R'ar right up and face your troubles
  In an English broadcloth, exceptional value in all sizes at $2.48 shirt!

Men have reached the top before you
  Who found sorrow on the way,
But their classy shirts upheld them
  In the thickest of the fray;
You can pick the keen go-getter,
  Bright and eager and alert,
By his square-cut jaws and shoulders
  And his Piccadilly Lounger, in madras and oxford, special week-end offering at $3.16 shirt.

Though the road is rough and rocky
  That you follow to success,
You can make it, if you'll study
  How the snappy dressers dress.
It is not the coat he's wearing
  Makes the man, old saws assert—
And they're right; the badge of greatness
  Is our Real Japanese silk, all fashionable shades, better buy a dozen at this price, to-day only $7.64 shirt!

THE RIGOURS OF REGINALD

A Fragment

Reggie's window-dressing now,
And all the town's gone bugs;
Through eager crowds you have to plough
To see Reg rig rag rugs.

ITEM OF ANCIENT HISTORY

When Demosthenes came from the pebble-strewn
beach,
His eloquent words were a shock,
For never in Athens had such a fine speech
Been made on the strength of white rock.

SWEET SADNESS

O LADIES in adjacent seats
  To mine, where movie art appears,
Who to the actors' tragic feats
  Pay tribute of ecstatic tears,
I would enjoy the picture, too,
If I could weep as much as you.

The heroine, bereft of job,
  Is led into a life of crime,
Whereat you lachrymosely sob,
  And have a most delightful time.
Your tears fall hotly on my neck
And leave my shirt a sodden wreck.

You likewise cry through scenes of joy,
  And sniffle at the shrine of bliss;
Your eyes are moist when girl and boy
  Melt in the throes of love's first kiss,
And tears like April showers descend
At the pre-nuptial happy end.

Sweet ladies, if my optic springs
  Could gush as brightly, flow as free,
I never would say caustic things
  Of cinema-photography—
Teach me whatever I should know,
And let me share your happy woe!

AT A FURRIER'S SHOW WINDOW

I HAVE a kind, benevolent soul
Which sometimes gets beyond control,
And so I used to run a fever
To think that mink, and fox, and beaver
Should die when young, should die when older,
To decorate some lady's shoulder;
That little animals should perish
To make some gal look rich and garish,
And part forever with their hides
That cuties might take auto rides.
I used to think it was a crime
About three-quarters of the time,
And with hot tears my eyes were brimmin'—
I was too young to go with wimmin.

Now, to the so-called weaker sex
I've said it both with flowers and checks,
And now no more my vision blurs
When I am contemplating furs.
I realize that foxes grin
As they sign waivers on their skin,
That mink and marten, if they're wise,
Rush gladly to the sacrifice,
That winsome skunk and uncouth seal
Suppress whatever pangs they feel,
Surrender joyfully their pelts
And murmur: "Was there something else?"

Not cruel is their fate, but kind—
How do I know it?
Never mind.

—AND ALL WAY STATIONS

The people of the seaboard,
  On large, expensive trains,
Regard with sad amazement
  The people of the plains,
Who live along the railroad
  In towns so very small
It takes an honest effort
  To notice them at all.

The towns along the railroad
  Have names like New Madrid,
Mechanicsburg and Arden,
  Smithville and Prairie Garden,
Pine Creek and Pyramid.
  Each may possess a savour,
A warm and vital glow
  To give it charm and flavour—
But one would never know.

Through windows thickly dusted,
  Or frost-enamelled panes,
Peer, more or less disgusted,
  The people on the trains.
Quite audibly they wonder,
  With overtones of scorn,
By what stupendous blunder
  The little towns were born.

And does all this discourage
  The men of New Madrid,
The housewives pent in Arden,
  The lads of Prairie Garden,
The babes of Pyramid?
  Well, I've no way of making
Charts of how such things go;
  Maybe their hearts are breaking—
But one would never know!

"ALL THE WANTED COLOURS"

When it becomes a pleasure and a duty
To render homage, as they say, to Beauty,
When it's desired to spend both time and money
Selecting something that will tickle Honey,
Where does one go?
Why, where do you suppose?
Straight to the counter that is labelled "Hose."

'Tis the voice of the salesgirl, I hear her declare:
"These hose are the latest, six dollars the pair";
And it all seems so simple, until she inquires:
"Please tell me what colour the lady desires."
Whereat, with a glibness that makes a man wince,
She reels off the names of the best-selling tints.

"We have moonlight and shadow,
Gunmetal and peach,
French nude and French bisque,
Froth and sawdust and bleach,
Aloma and atmosphere, sunset and fawn,
We have oyster and melon,
Pearl blush and gray dawn,
There is evenglow, amber,
Marron, and champagne,
Straw and pandora,
Illusion and grain—
In fact, there's no colour,
No shade, that we lack;
Though of course you don't want it,
We even have black!"

Right here, by the exit that's nearest and handy,
One dashes out madly—and buys her some candy!

How dear to my heart are the shows of my childhood,
The ten-twenty-thirties that I used to see!
The heroine, wearing her pure, undefiled hood,
Turned out in the snow—it was heaven to me.
The great James O'Neill in the great *Monte Cristo*,
The Beautiful Cloak Model fleeing from sin,
The suave Lewis Morrison playing Mephisto—
But best of them all was the play of *East Lynne*.

Whatever the season, its backbone was Shakespeare,
With James, Kellerd, Handford, Fred Warde, or Mantell;
They'd hire you as super to carry a fake spear,
And treat you, first hand, to the theatre's spell;
Or else *The Two Orphans* would rouse and excite you,
Ten Nights in a Barroom would grip and enthrall;
There were real actors then—how their speeches would smite you!—
And the play of *East Lynne* was the best of them all.

St. Elmo you've seen, if you chance to be lucky,
And possibly *Trilby*, though that didn't last;
And there was a show called *The Hills of Kentucky*
Put on with a perfectly marvellous cast.
I sha'n't mention more, for the list would be endless,
But I will say this, that your life has been thin
If poor Lady Isabel, weeping and friendless,
Hasn't busted your heart in the play of *East Lynne!*

THE YOUNG INTELLECTUAL TO HIS LOVE

Oh come with me, and we will try
The Great Experiment, you and I,
And each fulfil our several missions
Free from the usual inhibitions.

Oh come with me, and be my mate,
And we forthwith will emigrate
To countries which, I am advised,
Are more completely civilized.

You may express, for all of me,
Your Individuality;
Your freedom I will not restrain,
Or take your maiden Name in vain.

And since our plane lies far above
The crass vulgarities of Love,
Our union surely will be blessed
With Thoughts, impeccably expressed.

PRIZE POEM

Prizes for the best poems defining the word "service" have been offered by the Poetry Society of Great Britain.—Literary item.

I DO not want any prize; I will write it free,
A poem about what "service" means to me.
It will not be a very long piece, seeing that "service"
Has no rhymes to speak of, save possibly "nervous."

Service is what the luncheon club member drinks of,
It is just about all the American business man thinks of.
He lives in the midst of a land of milk and honey,
Yet dreams of service, and never of making money.

Service is always on the hotel manager's lips,
And the more you get, the more it costs you in tips;
Sometimes you are overcome with consternation
By the amount of service you get at a filling station.

"Service" was once a noun, but as things are,
You see such signs as "Let us service your car."
There are certain times when service becomes a menace,
E.g., it keeps me from being a shark at tennis.

We are now at the end of my metrical definition,
Which, as I said, is not offered in competition;
However, perhaps I may send what I have written
To help out the Poetry Society of Great Britain.

PIPE DREAM

I AM weary of warfare and worry,
I am sated with science and sin,
And I hate the habitual hurry
This poor planet's people are in;
I would rest from the roar and the riot,
From the furious fray I would flee;
My quest is not quarrel, but quiet—
James, bring me my tea!

As I lie in luxurious languor
In my simple but suitable suite,
I am clear of the clamorsome clangor
Of the marts where the merchantmen meet;
I am far from the fume and the fretting
Of the bank and the busy bazaar,
With their gabble of gaining and getting—
James, light my cigar!

While others are wearily working
And sordidly steeping in sweat,
I'm surely and shamelessly shirking
The busy bond-buyer's best bet;
I have hidden from hustle and hurry,
From cash, credit, climber, and cop;
I am weary of warfare and worry—
James, hand me the hop!

ASPIRATIONS OF A PUBLICAN

I OFTEN wish that I could be
A really first-class Pharisee;
Rejoicing, every now and then,
That I am not as other men.

Of course, I've always been a Scribe,
But that's a less distinguished tribe,
Which has, in its habitual pose,
Less elevation of the nose.

A Pharisee who knows his job
Is more than just a common snob;
His attitude, there is no question,
Helps both his sleep and his digestion.

Nothing can spoil a fellow's dinner
So much as knowing he's a sinner;
There's nothing makes his hair turn gray
So much as feeling in the way.

The Pharisee, each time he sneers,
Augments his life by several years;
The consciousness that he's elect
Preserves his teeth and self-respect.

I've often wished that I could say
That I am holier than they;
I've often thought that I might try,
But they are nervier than I!

SUMMER RESORTS

Some of my friends have gone to stay
  At Campville-in-the-Hills,
Surrounded, so the postcards say,
  By trees and mountain rills;
And other friends are summering
  At Smithport-by-the-Sea,
But simple Backyard-by-the-Swing
  Appeals a lot to me.

From Akawamis-by-the Pool
  Some gay sojourners write
They need (the evenings are so cool)
  Two blankets every night;
And similar reports are sent
  From Boomtown-mid-the-Trees,
But I am very well content
  With Armchair-in-the-Breeze.

Trips hard upon the pocketbook
  My restless neighbours take,
To Rheumatism-by-the-Brook
  Or Swampville-by-the-Lake;
But Kozy-Korner-at-the-Farm
  Entices me no more—
I am converted to the charm
  Of Ice-Box-by-the-Door.

MATERIA MEDICA

WHENEVER I think I am perfectly well,
With never a qualm or a quiver,
When my heart and my lungs are as sound as a bell
And peace spreads her wings o'er my liver,
The thing that upsets me and renders me sad,
Almost every time, if not quite, is
That I learn from a large and well-edited ad
I have something ending in *—itis.*

Or, if I have felt for the first time in years
Like eating a seven-course dinner,
If there isn't a squeak in my various gears,
And I'm getting acceptably thinner,
My casual reading is sure to include
A piece which, while far from verbose, is
The strongest of proof that my favourite food
Gives me something concluding with *—osis.*

When I think I am well, I am terribly ill,
When I think I am happy, I suffer;
Yet were I to swallow a tincture or pill,
I would be, I'm quite certain, a duffer.
No potion or powder can ever avail
To save me, no system of feeding—
The one thing to do, if I want to be hale,
Is to cut out the practice of reading!

BALLADE OF MOURNFUL NUMBERS

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year,
Leap year once in every four,
Opportunity, I hear,
Knocks too seldom at the door;
If my ship would come to shore
Ever, I would sing its praise—
Life's injustice makes me sore,
Bills come every thirty days.

Pollyanna, little dear,
Gets to be an awful bore,
Telling me to be of cheer,
Raising my *esprit de corps;*
What though all her honeyed lore
Prove that being happy pays?
I'm reminded, o'er and o'er,
Bills come every thirty days.

I must keep right on, I fear,
Buying trousers at the store,
People might esteem me queer
If no clothes I ever wore;
I must eat, though I deplore
Grocers and their grasping ways—
Always and forevermore
Bills come every thirty days.

Prince, I'm sorry that I swore
  At your merry roundelays,
But the tradesmen have the floor—
  Bills come every thirty days!

MEMORIAL DAY

And it is for the dead, we say,
  That hands are quick to bring
Blossoms that on the ground display
  The signature of Spring.

Bright flowers that have such haste to die
  After a day-long breath,
And in their dying signify
  The transiency of death.

Yet of the garlands that we strew
  Not all are for the grave;
Each of us mourns a living few
  He had no power to save.

And each on every day must feel
  Deep wounds that never bled,
And live through nights when dreams reveal
  Lost things that are not dead.

Dreams that have had no human birth,
  That year to year endure,
Untainted by the smell of earth
  And exquisitely pure.

LEGEND

WHEN Freedom from her mountain height
Descended to the haunts of men,
She thought that possibly she might
Be gladly welcomed now and then;
She thought of what a grateful tune
The happy people would intone
When they discovered what a boon
Had come to be their very own.

But when the people had received
The benefits that Freedom brings,
Of immemorial chains relieved,
They went and did the darnedest things!
They rioted and stole and lied,
And, when confronted with their shame,
As with one voice they alibied
That it was all in Freedom's name.

What Freedom said I will not quote,
But men inspired her to observe,
Along with other things of note,
Thus and to wit: "I like their nerve!"
And when the proper words were said
She furled her flag of spotless white,
And, with an unreluctant tread,
Retreated to her mountain height.

THE MINORITY DISSENTS

It is not considered to be in good form to congratulate a prospective bride.—Etiquette item.

If THAT is the rule, I'm agin it.
'Tis a false, hypocritical code;
Neither justice nor reason is in it—
Good manners be blowed!

It's not a great feat for a fellow
To pick out a feminine prize;
All girls (as a salesman would bellow)
Are "excellent buys."

But, such our creation's great plan is,
Unless you are stupid and blind
You know that a really good man is
A hard thing to find.

And a girl who has found one and grabbed him
Deserves in our heartiest tone
To be told we are glad she has nabbed him
For her very own.

So I shall congratulate ladies
In phrases both honest and warm;
And if that be treason, to Hades
With all your good form!

WRIT OF ABDICATION

"To-day the husband has assumed a position of relative obscurity in the home."—Opinion of a federal judge.

A MAN should be, if there is any merit
In the accumulated lore of years,
The master of his house. Let women share it,
But let them not assume the rank of peers;
Theirs is the burden of domestic bother,
But the last word should always rest with Father.

This being so, why the persistent rumour,
Sanctioned, it seems, by the judicial bench,
And painful to the ultimate consumer,
That the proud sheik is helot to the wench?
Is "Home, Sweet Home" a feministic song?
Something is most indubitably wrong.

It may be true: it must be, if our judges
From their high peak of wisdom tell the world.
Wives are no longer acquiescent drudges,
The husband's banner of command is furled,
The rights of man are swept aside like straws
And Honey Bunch is arbiter of laws.

Yet, dearest friends, do you observe us weeping
Or find gaunt hollows in our bearded cheeks?
Did we endure the revolution sleeping
And wake to find our spouses wore the breeks?
Well, not exactly. . . . Jot this motto down:
"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

LINES FOR "POETRY IN THE HOME" WEEK

Safety Week was a noble week,
And a week of high endeavour,
When I said to myself: "Young man, be safe,
And let who will be clever."
But that was the week I tried my luck,
Catch-as-catch-can, with a five-ton truck.

Prune Week was a thrilling week,
A nourishing week, forsooth,
But that was the week a prune's proud pit
Clashed with a fragile tooth;
And my last good cuff links went in pawn
With Save-and-Have Week not yet gone.

Music Week was as vital a week
As any that I have known,
But that was the week the neighbours' boy
Purchased a saxophone,
Which he played both *presto* and *con amore*
Till Silence Week was a twice-told story.

Yet I shall go on observing Weeks
In various kinds of ways;
I'll even do better: I'll toss my hat
In favour of special Days.
With me it's not the results they bring—
It's wholly the Principle of the Thing.

THOUGHTS AT THE MOVIES

Would Life were half as well directed
  As all the better movies are!
With every episode connected
  And every pretty girl a star.

Would I, instead of being played out
  And weary, in the final reel,
Might have a grand, triumphant fade-out
  Like Sydney Carton or Camille!

Or, better still, would I were tending
  Inevitably, inch by inch,
Toward the sort of happy ending
  That leaves the hero in a clinch!

Life could be made so much more thrillful,
  So much more gay, however brief,
If its scenario were skilful
  Concerning comedy relief.

How pleasant, too, for all God's chillun
  To have things fixed, on each one's screen,
So that invariably the villain
  Is worsted in the struggle scene.

But here's the best, most glorious vision
  To us who go with leaden hearts—
Shears working with undulled precision
  To cut out all the tiresome parts!

BALLAD OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

THERE was no sorrier man than I,
(*A singing star in the winter night*)
Who saw the Spirit of Christmas die.
(*O evergreen bough and holly!*)

The Spirit of Christmas, year by year,
Grew thin with horror and pale with fear,

Pale with fear for the vanishing worth
Of the Angel Song and the Manger Birth.

I saw the Spirit shudder and stop
Before the door of Ye Xmasse Shoppe,

And the Shoppe was full of trumpery toys,
Gilded trinkets, and money, and noise,

Hands that were soft, and eyes that were hard,
Buying Good Will on a coloured card.

The Spirit of Christmas wept to see
The dollar sign on the lighted tree,

Never a candle burning dim,
But placards shrieking: "For Her!" "For Him!"

Money flowed in a smothering tide,
And the Spirit of Christmas drooped—and died,

And over the snow the wind was cold,
As the buyers bought and the traders sold.

Dead the Spirit of Christmas lay,
And a small child came along that way.

Proud and happy, the child displayed
An awkward gift that her hands had made. . . .

I am the gladdest of mortal men,
(*A singing star in the winter night*)
Who saw, at the touch of a child of ten,
The Spirit of Christmas live again.
(*O evergreen bough and holly!*)

TO ALL SAD COMEDIANS

Always, from the dawn of time,
  Harlequin and Pantaloon,
Weary of the pantomime,
Crave a less uproarious task,
  Tire of playing the buffoon,
Long to wear the tragic mask.

Great comedians, low and high,
  Confidentially explain
They would lay their spangles by,
And, before another day,
  Act the Melancholy Dane,
If they only had their way.

And the critics and the crowd,
  Sitting in the judgment seat,
Half ashamed to laugh aloud,
Cry the merry-andrew down,
  Interrupt the laughing feet,
Call for pathos from the clown.

Never weaken, Harlequin,
  Never falter in your part;
Flaunt your everlasting grin
For the banner of a Cause!
  Only laughter warms the heart,
Laughter is the true applause.

THE END